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Title : Reproductive Biology of the Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin (Tursiops aduncus) Incidentally Caught in Gillnets off Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Category : Conservation

Student :

Preferred Format : Either Oral or Poster Presentation

Abstract : Age and reproductive parameters of 36 Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops aduncus) incidentally caught in gillnets around Zanzibar (Unguja) Island between January 2000 and August 2002 were analyzed for the first time. The results indicated that calves are born at a length of approximately 103 cm and weight of 12 kg for females and at a length around 104.5 cm and weight of 15.5 kg for males. First ovulation (sexual maturity), as judged by ovarian activity, develops after females are above 6 years old, at a length about 200 cm and weight 92 kg. Males exhibit testicular activity when they are about 13 years old, at a length about 202 cm and weight 112 kg. Both females and males may live more than 36 years, based on counts of Growth Layer Groups (GLGs) in teeth. The observed maximum length and weight for females was 221 cm and 148.5 kg respectively, while for males the maximum length and weight was 238 cm and 160 kg respectively. The results of the present study have shown that Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins have a long gestation period and mature late. Although further data are required before conclusions can be drawn, from the management perspective, it could be suggested that an increased mortality due to dolphin-fisheries interactions could severely impact local populations of this species. To ensure their sustainability therefore there is need to have better management measures of the species.